R E P O R T R E S U M E S

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THE COGNITIVE ENVIRONMENTS OF URBAN PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN. MANUAL OF INSTRUCTIONS FOR ADMINISTERING AND SCORING MOTHER'S ATTITUDES TOWARD CHILD'S BEHAVIOR LEADING TO MASTERY.

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THIS MANUAL DESCRIBES MEASURES USED IN "THE COGNITIVE ENVIRONMENTS OF URBAN PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN" PROJECT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO. THE SAMPLE FOR THE STUDY CONSISTED OF 163 NEGRO MOTHER-CHILD PAIRS SELECTED FROM 3 SOCIOECONOMIC CLASSES BASED ON THE FATHER'S OCCUPATION AND THE PARENTS' EDUCATION. A FOURTH GROUP INCLUDED FATHER-ABSENT FAMILIES. THE MOTHERS WERE INTERVIEWED AT HOME AND THE MOTHERS AND CHILDREN WERE TESTED AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO WHEN THE CHILDREN WERE 4 YEARS OLD. FOLLOW-UP DATA WERE OBTAINED WHEN THE CHILDREN WERE 6 AND AGAIN WHEN THEY WERE 7. TO DETERMINE HER ATTITUDES TOWARDS HER CHILD'S MASTERY BEHAVIOR, EACH MOTHER WAS GIVEN HYPOTHETICAL SITUATIONS IN WHICH HER CHILD'S BEHAVIOR IN MASTERING SKILLS CONFLICTED WITH OTHER PEOPLE OR DAMAGED OBJECTS. APPEALS USED TO CHANGE THE CHILD'S BEHAVIOR WERE SCORED ACCORDING TO 3 BASIC TYPES--(1) THE STATUS-NORMATIVE, (2) THE PERSON-SUBJECTIVE, AND (3) THE COGNITIVE-RATIONAL. AN ADDITIONAL CATEGORY, UNSCORABLE, WAS USED FOR VAGUE OR INAPPROPRIATE RESPONSES. THE SITUATION DESCRIPTIONS AND THE CRITERIA USED FOR SCORING ARE GIVEN, AND THE BASIC SCORING CATEGORIES ARE DISCUSSED. THIS IS A PART OF THE HOME INTERVIEW DESCRIBED IN PS 000 475. (DR)

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THE COGNITIVE ENVIRONMENTS OF URBAN PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN

Robert D. Hess, Principal Investigator

MANUAL OF INSTRUCTIONS

FOR ADMINISTERING AND SCORING

MOTHER'S ATTITUDES TOWARD

CHILD'S BEHAVIOR LEADING TO MASTERY

The measures described in this manual were developed in the project, Cognitive Environments of Urban Pre-School Children, supported by: Research Grant #R-34 from the Children's Bureau, Social Security Administration, and the Early Education Research Center, National Laboratory in Early Education, Office of Education, both of the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare; the Division of Research, Project Head Start, U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity; the Ford Foundation Fund for the Advancement of Learning; and grants-in-aid from the Social Science Research Committee of the Division of Social Sciences, University of Chicago.

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THE COGNITIVE ENVIRONMENTS OF URBAN PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN

The research sample for the Cognitive Environment Study was composed of 163 pairs of Negro mothers and their four-year-old children, from three socioeconomic classes, defined by father's occupation and parents' education: upper-middle, professional and executive, with college education; upper-lower, skilled and blue collar, with high school education; lower-lower, semiskilled and unskilled, with no greater than tenth-grade education; a fourth group included father-absent families living on public assistance, otherwise identical to the lower-lower class group.

Subjects were interviewed in the home, and mothers and children were brought to the University of Chicago campus for testing, when the children were four years old. Follow-up data were obtained from both mother and child when the child was six years of age, and again at seven years.

Principal investigator for the project is Professor Robert D. Hess, formerly Director, Urban Child Center, University of Chicago, now Lee Jacks Professor of Child Education, School of Education, Stanford University.

Co-Investigator for the follow-up study is Dr. Virginia C. Shipman, Research Associate (Associate Professor) and Lecturer, Committee on Human Development, and Director, Project Head Start Evaluation and Research Center, University of Chicago, who served as Project Director for the pre-school phase of the research.

Dr. Jere Edward Brophy, Research Associate (Assistant Professor), Committee on Human Development, University of Chicago, was Project Director for the follow-up study and participated as a member of the research staff of the pre-school study.

Dr. Roberta Meyer Bear, Research Associate (Assistant Professor), Committee on Human Development, University of Chicago, participated as a member of the research staff during the pre-school and follow-up phases of the project and was in charge of the manuscript preparation during the write-up phase of the research.

Other staff members who contributed greatly to the project include Dr. Ellis Olim, (University of Massachusetts, Amherst) who was responsible for the major analysis of maternal language; Dr. David Jackson, (Toronto, Ontario) who was involved in early stages of development of categories for the analysis of mother-child interaction, and participated in the processing and analysis of data; Mrs. Dorothy Runner, who supervised the training and work of the home interviewers, acted as a liason with public agencies, and had primary responsibility for obtaining the sample of subjects; and Mrs. Susan Beal, computer programmer.

COGNITIVE ENVIRONMENT STUDY

MANUAL FOR ADMINISTERING AND SCORING

MOTHER'S ATTITUDES TOWARD CHILD'S

BEHAVIOR LEADING TO MASTERY

SUMMER 1967

INTRODUCTION

Mothers were presented a series of nine hypothetical situations in which the child's behavior in the course of mastering certain skills came into conflict with the environment of persons and objects: he damaged property in the home or belonging to others, made a mess, or disturbed someone. The mother was asked what she would do if her child accidentally created such a conflict situation. The mother's responses were recorded and given a single score for the major type of appeal used to effect a change in the child's behavior, to explain to him why such behavior was undesirable, or to avoid or resolve the conflict.

The three basic types of appeal for which the responses were scored were Status-normative, Person-subjective, and Cognitive-rational. General definitions of the three as used for scoring this and other tasks are given in a later section of this manual, followed by specific descriptions of the appeals as they were used to score mothers' responses to the Mastery Situations. A fourth scoring category, Unscorable, was used when the mother's answer was too vague to be scored or was irrelevant or otherwise inappropriate to the question asked.

ADMINISTRATION

During the home interview, mothers were asked to respond to eight hypothetical mastery situations. Their responses were tape-recorded and later transcribed; the typed protocols were used for scoring.

PS 000478

COGNITIVE ENVIRONMENT STUDY

MANUAL FOR ADMINISTERING AND SCORING

MOTHER'S ATTITUDES TOWARD CHILD'S BEHAVIOR LEADING TO MASTERY

1. WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF _____ WAS JUST LEARNING TO RIDE A TRICYCLE AND ACCIDENTALLY RODE INTO A FLOWER BED AND BROKE DOWN A BEAUTIFUL ROSE BUSH BELONGING TO A NEIGHBOR?

2. WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF _____ WAS TRYING TO PAINT A PICTURE AND ACCIDENTALLY SPLASHED PAINT ALL OVER A NEARBY CHAIR WHICH HAD A CLEAN SLIP COVER ON IT? (or on a new rug you had just gotten for your living room?)

3. WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF _____ WAS OUT WITH YOU SOMEPLACE WHERE THERE WERE VERY FINE BOOKS AND HE/SHE TOOK ONE OF THESE TO LOOK AT WHEN HIS/HER HANDS WERE STICKY, AND GOT SPLOTCHES ALL OVER IT?

4. WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF _____ SPILLED SOUP ALL OVER WHILE ATTEMPTING TO FEED HIM/HERSELF?

5. WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF _____ WAS MOLDING A SAND CASTLE OR SOMETHING AT THE BEACH IN THE SUMMER, AND HE/SHE ACCIDENTALLY GOT SOME SAND IN SOMEONE'S EYE?

6. WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF YOU HAD _____ IN A SUPER MARKET, AND HE/SHE KEPT RUNNING AROUND POINTING OUT THINGS ON THE SHELVES SO THAT YOUR SHOPPING WAS SLOWED UP AND HE/SHE WAS GETTING IN THE WAY OF OTHER SHOPPERS?

7. WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF _____ WAS TRYING TO LEARN TO SWEEP AND ACCIDENTALLY BROKE SOMETHING OF VALUE?

8. WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF _____ WAS LEARNING A SONG AND KEPT SINGING, DISTURBING SOMESONE WHO WAS TRYING TO SLEEP?

9. WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF YOU FOUND _____ TAKING A GOOD CLOCK APART SO THAT HE COULD SEE WHAT MADE IT TICK AND HE/SHE EITHER BROKE OR LOST SOME OF THE PIECES?

THE BASIC SCORING CATEGORIES

1. The Status-normative appeal is based on both an assumed justice in the status quo and a reliance on traditional definitions of proper behavior. Maternal statements which fit this category are imperative or absolute, calling for compliance with established definitions of status and role positions. Primary instances of normative status are age-roles and sex-roles: certain behaviors are proper for boys but not for girls, and vice versa; children are expected to defer to parents and other adults by virtue of the age difference or because adults are larger and more powerful.

Social norms and parental commands are expressed as absolutes, and are to be accepted as given, not regarded as objects or occasions of inquiry or debate. The child is oriented toward obeying externally-enforced, institutionally-defined rules.

2. The Person-subjective appeal is based on internal, personal, uniquely individual states of the participants in an exchange, rather than on group-defined statuses and normative roles. Where conflict occurs between the child and others or between the child and social institutions, the child's feelings and preferences are taken into account. The child is, in turn, encouraged to take the role of another, to examine his behavior from a different perspective, and is expected to alter that behavior accordingly. The child's attention is directed toward individuals rather than to roles, and to feelings and preferences rather than to rules. The child is oriented toward establishing empathy with other individuals.

3. The Cognitive-rational appeal is based on reasonable argument. The present situation or the state of events desired by the parent is justified by the specific elements of the situation - although some general rule may be applied, and the existence of alternatives is suggested or stated. Antecedent-consequent considerations are stressed which may not necessarily reflect the status, role, or subjective state of the participants, but which have a pragmatic logic. This approach not only permits consideration of alternatives, it also encourages debate and exploration of possibilities for resolving a conflict. The child is oriented toward establishing a system of logical principles.

THE SCORING CODES

Maternal responses to each situation were scored for the major type of appeal used by the mother in dealing with the situation, as specified below:

(S) = The mother commands absolute obedience to social norms and institutionalized rules; the command is justified, if at all, by the relative status of the persons involved or by the norms and rules themselves. The status quo is supported and upheld.

(P) = The mother encourages the child to empathize with another's feelings and/or considers the child's feelings in explaining his behavior; the justification for any action taken includes some statement of the subjective states of the persons involved, and the necessity of taking feelings into account.

(R) = The mother explains that the specific elements leading up to and involved in the present situation logically demand a certain resolution, and she asks the child to examine the situation rationally or she details the reasons for a particular demand, justifying her expectations by logical reasoning.

(I) = Irrelevant, inappropriate, or vague responses which cannot be scored as one of the above.

SPECIFIC CODING CATEGORIES FOR MASTERY SITUATIONS

S = Status-normative appeal: responses which reinforce expectations of correct or "proper" behavior toward the role or property of others; and responses which define and justify expected behavior in terms of the relative or absolute status of the child. Expectations for behavior are phrased as commands; they are imperative and absolute.

P = Person-subjective appeal: responses which clearly take into account the child's unique personal attributes, his feelings, wishes, and motivation; and responses which attempt to explain the feelings of others and encourage the child to view the meaning and results of his behavior from another perspective (e.g., as if he were the injured or wronged party).

R = Cognitive-rational appeal: responses which clearly include consideration of the unique specific qualities of the given situation, rather than consideration of normative expectations; and responses in which the mother uses logical reasoning to explain her actions toward the child, to bolster her conclusions and actions, or to explain the situation to the child or others.

I = Irrelevant, Inappropriate, or Vague: responses in which the mother fails to deal with the conflict or fails to indicate clearly the rationale for any action she might take or expect from others.